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CD NO.

LANGUAGE Russian

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SOURCE Meditsinskiy Rabotnik, No 14 (826), 1949.

IMPROVED MEDICAL AID FOR KUZNETS COAL FIELD

Main Admin State Sanitary Inspection RSFSR

The Board of the Ministry of Public Health USSR has decided to cooperate with the Ministry of Coal Industries on a plan for improved medical aid for miners. This plan has been pending for several years.

As part of the preparatory work, a special commission investigated the incidence of disease among miners of the Kuznets Coal Field. It was determined that several different forms of disease were closely related to the working conditions in the mine. With improved mine operating conditions there has been a constant decrease in the incidence of disease. Thus, records for the past 11 years (1937 - 1948) show that much has been done to increase mine safety and mechanization of various mining operations. Consequently, it has been possible to reduce the morbidity rate by some 49 percent. Industrial accidents decreased by 57.3 percent per day for the same period. Further analysis of the data showed that most of the injuries were sustained by miners who had been working in the mines for periods less than 2 years.

The main reason for this was traced to lack of proper training of young miners prior to assignment in the pits. Many of the injuries were caused by falling rock, attributed to weak and old tunnel supports. However, much of this has been eliminated by the installation of steel netting and steel supports.

Many man-hours were lost because miners did not attend to minor hand injuries. In most cases, minor injuries became infected, necessitating long treatment and absence from work. Elimination of suppurative injuries is

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progressing slowly. For the cited 11-year period, they have decreased by only 14 percent. However, it was noticed that improved operating conditions greatly decreased the number of miners who were hospitalized for suppurative injuries. This was particularly noticeable at the "Ziminka" mine where the operations were modernized and where the rate of suppurative cases was decreased by 50 percent.

Young miners are a particular problem. No effort must be spared to provide facilities for sufficient physical exercise above ground. In winter, when opportunities for outdoor exercises are slight, it is suggested that large batteries of ultraviolet lamps be set up to supply the miners with the benefits lost by working without sunlight. This suggestion has been put into effect at the Mine imeni Stalin, and has given very satisfactory results.

Antiphagin developed by the Moscow Institute imeni Mechnikov has proved effective in curing many suppurative injuries and has proved an effective cure for furuncles and carbuncles. Unfortunately it is not known whether this preparation can be used as a prophylactic.

The above improvements have served to decrease the number of miners injured by about 20 percent.

For that same 11-year period the number of grippe cases was cut by 50 percent. This proves that improved housing conditions, better training of personnel, improved mining equipment, better physical examinations of miners have all played a positive part in the decrease of morbidity rate among miners.

The general picture of decrease in the number of man-hours lost due to acute gastrointestinal diseases is somewhat similar to that showing the decrease in the number of grippe cases. These diseases comprised about 10 percent of the total number of diseases which affected the miners. It was difficult to determine the exact cause of these diseases. Much was accomplished by maintaining a strict surveillance of the miner's diets and their water supply. Recently, an efficient method has been devised for dispensing water in the mines. Each miner is given his own cup, and he draws boiled and sterilized water from a central station. At the end of the shift, he returns his cup which is thoroughly sterilized before being handed out to another miner. This expediency alone has effectively decreased the number of patients requiring treatment for gastrointestinal diseases.

Careful examination of the compiled records on the above four categories showed that there was a close relationship between their occurrence and the miners' working conditions. However, the miner must be warned that much depends on the individual irrespective of improved working conditions; if the miner is careless, it will be impossible to decrease the number of hospitalized cases and the number of lost man-hours will not be eliminated.

In 1948, miners of the Kuznets Coal Fields received an additional 448,000 square meters of living space. In addition, they have access to 48,000 square meters of communal housing. On the other hand, plumbing and bath fixtures are being installed rather slowly, the installation of drains is unsatisfactory, and very little has been done to furnish the miners with bus or trolley transportation necessary for comfortable and hygienic living conditions.

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